



**NEWS**

## ***Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas***

***L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2<sup>nd</sup> District***

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS, BOARD OBSERVE BLACK HISTORY MONTH PAYING TRIBUTE TO TAVIS SMILEY, RETURN OF THE 'STATE OF THE BLACK UNION' TO L.A. COUNTY**

***Board honors Tavis Smiley at the Tuesday, February 24, 2009 meeting***

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY** — Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday honored Tavis Smiley, host of the late night television talk show, *Tavis Smiley* on PBS and *The Tavis Smiley Show* distributed by Public Radio International, as part of the Second District's observance of Black History Month.

"We recognize Tavis as one of our very own, as a result of his labor in the Greater Los Angeles community, but obviously not defined or limited by that experience to the extent that he has made his mark nationally and internationally, interviewing U.S. presidents and heads of states across the globe, including the Pope and many other notable international figures," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas stated.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas also highlighted the significance of Smiley's 2009 "State of the Black Union," scheduled to take place Saturday, February 28 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The annual symposium, featuring many of the nation's best and brightest minds, has become one of the most anticipated events for millions of African Americans during the last decade.

"This is the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that very important national dialogue that takes place this time of the year on an annual basis, explained Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas.

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“The contributors to it and those that it attracts as analyst are among the “whose-who” in the nation and beyond. Each year they respond with no hesitation to the invitation of Tavis Smiley.”

In a show of mutual admiration, Smiley pointed out the importance of highlighting significant events affecting African Americans. “The presence is history,” Smiley said during his address to the audience, acknowledging the accomplishment of Supervisor Ridley-Thomas’ becoming the first African-American male in history to hold the L.A. County Board of Supervisors’ seat. “I revel in your being on this board. I revel in the history that you represent,” Smiley said.

The event will return to Los Angeles — the site of the first symposium — in celebration of its anniversary. Under the theme, “Making America As Good As Its Promise,” the symposium promises to capture the essence of what it has meant for African Americans to be enlightened, encouraged, and empowered by these solution-driven conversations over the years.

The State of the Black Union will feature two panel discussions from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM and 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Smiley and attorney Raymond Brown will moderate the discussion that will be broadcast live to millions of viewers on C-SPAN.

Admission is free and open to the public. Advance registration is required online at [www.tavistalks.com](http://www.tavistalks.com).

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